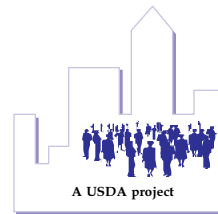


Champion Communities News



Monthly Newsletter of the Champion Communities Project October, 1996 Vol. 2, No. 1

Stories inside:

✓ **Feds struggle with ways to grant waiver requests.**

Turn to page 2.

✓ **Ada, Oklahoma, CC making plans for 2nd round funding**

Read about it on page 3.

CC quotes

Quotes are from Texas Champion Communities Conference, Oct 22-23, San Antonio:

"I believe as we look to the future, with the talent we have and the work we are doing, our children will have access to the information superhighway, health care, education, job opportunities...the way we're going to do this is by being more involved in providing technical assistance and guidance, and being partners with the communities we work with." — USDA Under Secretary Jill Long Thompson

"So, the energy is there, the excitement is there...I encourage you — I encourage you! — to put your heads together to work on that strategic plan and revitalize it if you need to, because the second round (of EZ/EC funding) is coming along." — Bonnie Gonzalez, chief executive officer for Rio Grande Valley Empowerment Zone

"The level of continued planning and continued involvement will be critical in the competition of people applying for it (possible second round of EZ/EC funding which will be considered by Congress in early 1997). I think Champion Communities are a great resource, with or without a second round, and we want to sponsor their success...and to provide whatever resources we can." — Margaret Pugh, member of Vice President Al Gore's Community Empowerment Board (CEB)

Salem, Missouri, CC getting fiber optics

...New technology will link small rural town to great big world

By Jacqueline McGee, Esq.

Champion Communities Project Leader

Salem, MO, is a small community of 5,300 people located in the region of Missouri known as the Ozarks. While on a visit there Oct. 1, I learned about the good progress which townspeople are making on their community strategic development plan.

One outstanding accomplishment is the acquisition of fiber optic technology through a partnership arrangement which other Champion Communities could also utilize.

Through its Salem Area Community Betterment Association (SACBA), the town reached an agreement with Sprint, the telecommunications company, to install fiber optic lines which are used to send and receive various types of information in a very efficient manner. This new technology will greatly help Salem to continue to be involved and abreast of matters that go on far outside their area. The fiber optic system will be installed in carefully planned stages with businesses and related industries receiving lines first.

As these businesses go on-line, the community as a whole will eventually receive the new technology. SACBA chairman Gerald Craig notes that this type of partnership may be useful to other communities that are somewhat isolated but still need to maintain speed with the ever-changing world.

One of the main reasons why Salem pursued the project was because one of their largest industries (Kraft Foods) makes use of computers and other types of information systems. So this type of technology is key to helping the industry remain competitive and, most importantly, to remain in Salem.

Craig said that Salem in its 10-year strategic plan has made provisions for job training in the area of fiber optics. It is SACBA's hope that one day people trained in this field will be able to utilize their skills in Salem, as well as other communities nationwide.

**Salem residents make steady progress on strategic plan.
Story's on page 4.**

Arkansas CCs meet at Little Rock for fall conference

Arkansas Champion Communities will gather for a fall resource conference from Nov. 20-21 at Little Rock. The nine communities met last May 7 for an organizational meeting to form a statewide network and initiative.

Funding for the conference is being provided by the W.K. Kellogg and Winthrop Rockefeller foundations. Speakers will include Victor Vasquez, EZ/EC coordinator, Norman Reid, director of USDA Community Out-

reach, Jacqueline McGee of Atlanta, GA, leader of the national Champion Communities Project Technical Assistance Team, Debby Warren, director of the Southern Rural Development Initiative of Raleigh, NC, Pamela Moore, USDA EZ Rural Learning Initiative of Greenville, MS, Wynn Grossman, director of research and development, HealthCare Forum, San Francisco, CA, and Patricia Montoya of (See Arkansas CCs page 4)

New processes studied for addressing CC & EZ/EC waiver requests

By Katherine Adam
NCAT Program Specialist

In the course of developing a strategic plan, many Champion and EZ/EC communities have found that they fall just outside the requirements for a particular government program.

EZs and ECs have submitted requests for statutory and regulatory waivers to nearly every Community Empowerment Board (CEB) program agency. HUD has received over 300 waiver requests, many of which involved eligible uses of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Communities have been interested in relaxing CDBG regulations to allow for new construction developments or to combine funding with other HUD programs.

Champion Communities have submitted requests for waivers primarily to USDA. In some cases just certain tracts or BNAs have failed to meet the requirements of a program that would benefit an integral community.

Finding & addressing barriers

An analysis was made of the waiver requests submitted to USDA by Champion Communities during the EZ/EC application process in 1994. Out of 131 requests, one was granted by the national office, which was handling all requests for waivers at that time. A breakdown showed that a total of 42 requests had to be denied for statutory reasons; only five denials were discretionary.

Finding and addressing barriers has been a concern of the Community Empowerment Board from the beginning of the initiative. Recently, all CEB agencies have been asked to review all waiver requests and identify:

- Which required no waivers
- Which were discretionary
- Which were statutorily prohibited.

Experience has proved that many communities are seeking relief

from requirements imposed by state governments. CEB agencies have been directed, through dialogue with the appropriate state departments, to look for ways to facilitate problem-solving and barrier removal for EZs and ECs in their region. For the rural Champion Communities, contacting the state director of USDA/Rural Development is the appropriate first step in solving such problems, many of which can (and should) be resolved at the state level.

Some of the barriers encountered will require federal legislation to overcome. For example, the

Department of Labor

received nearly 200 requests (from EZs and ECs alone) seeking relief from certain eligibility restrictions of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or requesting increases in thresholds for paying prevailing wage rates required by the Davis-Bacon Act.

The Administration has proposed legislation addressing not only these JTPA restrictions, but also those for some 70 other job training programs. Proposed legislation would subsume JTPA and ultimately provide states with more flexibility in design and operation of workforce development programs. All block grant proposals are being monitored to ensure that impediments identified are addressed.

Help to identify statutory/regulatory barriers

Communities are encouraged to continue to identify statutory and regulatory barriers as they proceed to implement their strategic plans. The Administration is reviewing all requests for waivers that are statutorily prohibited and proposing appropriate legislative changes.

An analysis was made of the waiver requests submitted to USDA by Champion Communities during the EZ/EC application process in 1994. Out of 131 requests, only one was granted.

(Much of this information is summarized from the EZ/EC Web site. For more information go to <http://www.ezec.gov/toolbox/process.html>.)

CCs invited to tune into satellite broadcast to explore business franchising

Officials and interested citizens from Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Communities, Champion Communities and communities throughout the United States are invited to join United States Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Jill Long Thompson and United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Assistant Secretary Andrew Cuomo from 1 to 3 p.m. on November 22, 1996, for a satellite broadcast program to explore opportunities in business franchising. Thompson and Cuomo will introduce two panels of experts who will describe the various issues involved in the franchising process. A call-in question and answer period will wrap-up the broadcast.

Representatives of various segments of the franchising industry, including Don DeBolt, President of the International Franchise Association, will discuss how to identify community needs and the pluses and minuses of owning a franchise business. Panel members will also offer insights

on investment costs, training and growth opportunities.

Financing, capital investment and technical assistance for franchises and independent businesses will be addressed by a second panel of individuals from the Small Business Administration (SBA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), a SBA licensed Small Business Investment Co., and from the banking industry.

Currently, U.S. franchises employ in excess of 8 million people, contribute more than \$800 billion annually to the economy and account for two-fifths of all retail sales. By the year 2000 it is anticipated that sales through franchising will reach \$1 trillion and represent over 50% of all retail sales in the U.S. This broadcast is intended to help distressed communities assess the benefits of having resident entrepreneurs open local franchised businesses and to explain the process for becoming a franchisee.

(See Broadcast page 4)

Spirited volunteers, team work pay big dividends for Ada, Oklahoma, CC

Someone like Billie Jean Floyd is what every Champion Community needs — a community catalyst at work daily to keep the fires burning under the strategic development plan. In most instances, such a person acts on a volunteer basis or is nominally paid by the Champion Community — their motivation a love of the community and its residents. Floyd is a retired college professor who grew up in Ada, a one-time oil mecca of 20,000 people.

Last May, Floyd was hired as executive director of the Ada Area Community Development Corporation (AACDC). The CDC wanted Floyd to help implement the 1994 strategic development plan and work with existing committees to create a new application proposal for additional EZ/EC funding which could be approved by Congress in early 1997.

Staying focused

"Former people working on the EZ/EC process were working full-time at their jobs and trying to put the proposal together at the same time," she says. "I know how much time I am spending working with the seven smaller groups, speaking to organizations at their programs, working with six grant writers, keeping the AACDC Board informed, doing surveys and interviews, arranging public meetings, and just in general keeping everyone focused on our goal."

Early on, Floyd and colleague Kay Wynn traveled to nearby Hugo to view and copy portions of that town's winning EC proposal for use in their own work. A majority of her time these days is spent networking with existing committees and enlisting new partners among community residents, organizations, agencies, businesses, school systems and local government.

CDC's many accomplishments

"In fact, every person — man, woman or child — I can talk to about our plans for improving the economy and quality of life in the Ada area is being included," she says.

Dedicated involvement from Ada's community committees, many spirited volunteers and townspeople with the 1994 strategic development plan has produced many benchmarks.

"Although the Ada Area CDC was not successful in receiving the grant in 1994, they were successful in having Ada designated as a Champion

Community, giving the city top priority in all other federal programs," Floyd said. "As we prepare now to make another attempt at this grant (EZ/EC), we will be looking at these benchmarks

Ada. Fifteen small business owners recently attended a CDC-sponsored Small Business Workshop, the first of many planned for the near future.

◆ Additional programs have been instituted at the Ada Boys and Girls Club, thanks to

Ada committees already at work on '97 EZ/EC proposal

People in the Champion Community of Ada, Oklahoma, are already formulating their proposal for a possible second round of EZ/EC funding in 1997.

Committees that have been working on seven key tasks of the town's 1994 strategic development plan are now circulating a series of surveys through the town to gather grassroots input about long- and short-term needs, goals and solutions. Once survey feedback is gathered, the committees will host a series of townhall meetings to gather additional citizen comments for a new strategic development plan.

Surveys circulated

"There are well over 100 people working in small groups continuing to improve the '94 proposal," Billie Jean Floyd of the Ada Area Community Development Corporation said. "I have found six people with grant-writing experience who are helping the small groups prepare their findings for the '97 proposal...The small working groups are collecting information from people in the targeted area, door to door, by telephone, through meetings and any other way possible to get grassroots input."

Faculty members of East Central University and Pontotoc Area Vo-Tech helped the committees to draft the surveys, which poll residents on issues involving housing, education, jobs and economic development, health and medical care, recreation, transportation, infrastructure and youth development.

Surveys gathered to date point up such needs as a new EMS station in the west part of town, cramped quarters at the nutrition and wellness center, and a need to upgrade housing for elderly people on fixed incomes and young couples with children in an older part of town.

as guidelines for future projects."

Some benchmarks to date include:

- ◆ The AACDC contributed \$30,000 in a partnership arrangement with the city for rehabilitation of 12 owner-occupied homes in a low-income area. The monies were matched with a grant from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, for a total \$209,460.
- ◆ Through grants and citizen donations, Helping Hands Outreach Center has upgraded living conditions, improved kitchen and eating facilities, and made building improvements (including a new roof) to provide temporary shelter for Ada homeless.
- ◆ With grant and matching money, the CDC has purchased one bus and plans to buy two more buses to transport low-income people to medical and mental health facilities for screenings, cancer treatment, dentistry, immunizations, chiropractic care and optometry. In the past 16 months, the bus has transported 5,327 riders.
- ◆ A vacant business complex was reactivated to make way for three new business tenants employing 140 people. The CDC recently supplied a vehicle and helped another business which employs 38 people to move to

members of the CDC's youth activities task force. About 550 children participate in the wrestling, basketball and soccer programs there, with another 200 enrolled in the summer program. During the school year, the Club provides supervised recreation weekdays from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

◆ The Chickasaw Nation recently completed a new Head Start program. Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby serves on the CDC Board.

◆ A recently-acquired rural health grant will be used to identify health care needs from among residents, health care providers and the state health department.

◆ With donations from CDC members and city money, a major project has been launched for badly-needed repairs on Main Street. Work will include re-doing water lines, drainage systems and catch basins, and resurfacing the street.

◆ With CDC assistance, the Pontotoc Area Vo-Tech has provided training for employees laid off from area industries, on-going training for Chickasaw Nation employees, and training for low-income high school students. In 1995, 103 pell grant recipients received training at the school.



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A USDA project to keep the EZ/EC dream alive in 194 rural communities.

Salem, MO, CC raises \$30M for economic development, infrastructure & human services

Residents of the Salem/Dent County CC since 1994 have concentrated on three pivotal points of their strategic plan: Economic Development, Infrastructure and Human Services. The community has been able to raise and lobby for about \$30 million in private and government funds for various projects, which are:

Economic Development

- ◆ Natural gas installed by private enterprise (Utilicorp of St. Louis) for \$6 million. Salem residents voted to award a franchise to a private gas company for the project which will encourage economic growth.
- ◆ The city purchased 126 acres for an industrial park and put in water, sewer and lighting. A California perfume factory which employed 15 people soon after located in the park.
- ◆ Salem purchased and made available a vacant building in its industrial park to a local industry which added a cutting operation and 85 new jobs.
- ◆ The city worked with a private company which just completed a new low-income housing facility.

Arkansas CCs

(Continued from page 1)

Dallas, regional director of HHS.

Conference sessions will center on "Developing Networks Among Champs-ECs: Transferring Models and Sharing Ideas Through Networks," "Building and Sustaining Collaborative Approaches to Community Change," "How-to's of Fundraising: Finding Possible Foundation/Corporate Partners and Developing Proposals," "Developing Benchmarks and Action Plans to Guide Work of Champions," "EZ/EC Round 2 in Detail: New Opportunities for Champions" and "Internet: Immediate Applications for Champions."

Broadcast

(Continued from page 2)

The satellite broadcast will be available at:
Galaxy 6 C-Band @ 74 Degrees West Transponder: 2(V) Downlink
FRQ: 3740 MHz Audio FRQ: 6.2 & 6.8 Test and Tone: 12:30
p.m. EST - 1:00 p.m. EST

Trouble Number: 202-720-4001 or 202-720-8559 (If you are experiencing difficulty receiving the satellite transmission, please be at your satellite receiver before calling the trouble number. This will speed the process of helping you tune in the transmission.)

****NOTE**** Galaxy 6 is positioned at 74 degrees west. If you have not had your receiver updated within the last year, it may be listed as Galaxy 2R in your Menu. If that is the case, Tune to Galaxy 2R (74Deg.) and you should find the program.

For more information about the program contact: Randy Slovic 202-260-6535.

Infrastructure

- ◆ Upgrading Hwy. 72, a winding, hilly highway which is the area's main thoroughfare. SACBA President Gerald Craig says the entire community pressed the state highway department to make this a priority project. \$16.2 million in state and federal money has been pledged and highway work is underway.
- ◆ Sewer and water system upgraded from a capital improvements sales tax passed by voters. The one-half cent sales tax will extend for seven years, bringing in an estimated \$380,000 per year for a total \$2.66 million.
- ◆ The city from its general revenues fund spent \$200,000 for a new water well and \$370,000 to update electric service.

Human Services

- ◆ New middle school and school improvements. A bond issue and increase in property taxes for 15 years approved by Salem voters will raise about \$3.4 million for the school projects.
- ◆ Healthy Community 2000, a volunteer group, has assisted in recruiting two new doctors to the community and has sponsored two Leadership Training and Skills Enhancement Programs. The group has received financial and technical assistance from the National Rural Health Association which is active in 17 Champion Communities. Applications have been filed for additional funding grants for startup costs of a physician after-hours program.
- ◆ The Steps to Excellence youth group published a brochure to increase awareness of teen social problems such as drinking, drugs, smoking, teen pregnancy and school dropouts. The group is monitoring compliance of laws concerning sales of tobacco and alcohol to youths in the community.

Champion Communities News

Jacqueline McGee, Champion Communities Project Leader
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Champion Communities News is compiled and published monthly by staff members of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) which is coordinating the Champion Communities Technical Assistance Project. It is mailed free-of-charge to all 194 Champion Communities, as well as other communities and individuals across the U.S.

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